215

THE

WONDERFUL CURE

OF

THE LEPER.

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THE LEPER CURED.

Nearly three thousand years ago, there lived in a country to the west, named Syria, a famous general, called Naaman. He was a very brave man, and had gained some great victories over the enemies of his country. He was therefore very much loved by his king, who gave him great wealth, and made him captain over all his soldiers.

But all the greatness of Naaman did not make him happy. How

was this? Naaman was a leper. Leprosy is a terrible disease. The body becomes covered with loathsome sores, and wastes away till the person dies. No medicine, no doctor was able to cure Naaman's leprosy. Poor Naaman! This sickness made him feel very sad; and he often wished he could be well, and enjoy all his riches and honours. There is always something in this world to make us unhappy.

Among the slaves of Naaman there was a girl, who, during the wars with the land of Israel, had been carried away prisoner, and became a servant to Naaman's

wife. She was very obedient, and tried to please her mistress. Though she had been made a slave, she showed a loving spirit. Her master and mistress were very kind to her; and the little maid loved them and felt grateful to them. When she saw her master suffering so much, she was very sorry, and she thought, "I wish I could help my master!" Then she remembered that in her own country there was a great prophet, who had raised a dead child to life, and done many other wonderful things.

One day, when the maid was

waiting on her mistress, she said, "Would God that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." Naaman's wife told her husband what the maid had said, and he was so glad to hear of any body that could cure him of this dreadful disease, that he spoke about it to the king. The king was also very pleased, and said he would give Naaman a letter to the king of the country where the prophet lived.

Naaman then got ready for the journey. He took with him a great deal of gold, and silver, and cloth-

ing, and a great many servants. This is what was in the letter which Naaman brought to the king of Israel:

"Behold, I have sent Naaman, my servant, to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy."

When the king of Israel read this letter, he rent his clothes and said, "Am I God to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? See how he seeketh a quarrel against me!"

When the prophet, whose name was Elisha, heard of this, he sent a message to the king, "Let him

come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

Naaman came with his horses and his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of the prophet. The prophet did not come out to meet him; he only sent a messenger to him saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean."

Naaman was very angry at this. He said, "Why did not the prophet come out to me and call upon his God, and put his hand over the place and cure the leprosy? Why should I bathe in the Jordan?

There are better rivers in my own country. May I not wash in them and be clean?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage. It was not Jordan's waters that could cure the leprosy, but the power of God.

The servants of Naaman were very sorry. They wished their master to be well; but he could not be cured if he did not obey the prophet's command. They said to Naaman, "My father, if the prophet had told thee to do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then,

when he saith to thee, wash and be clean?"

Naaman felt that his servants were right and that he had done very wrong; so he went to the river, and dipped himself in it seven times as the prophet had told him. Was he healed? Yes, his flesh became soft and smooth like the flesh of a little child.

Naaman was very thankful to be well again. He went back to the prophet's house with all his company, and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." The gods of

his own country were only idols, and could not cure him. Naaman then begged the prophet again and again to take a present; but he would not receive any thing. He wished to show Naaman that he had not made him well, that he might get money. The prophet made him well, that he might believe in the one true God. He then sent Naaman home in peace.

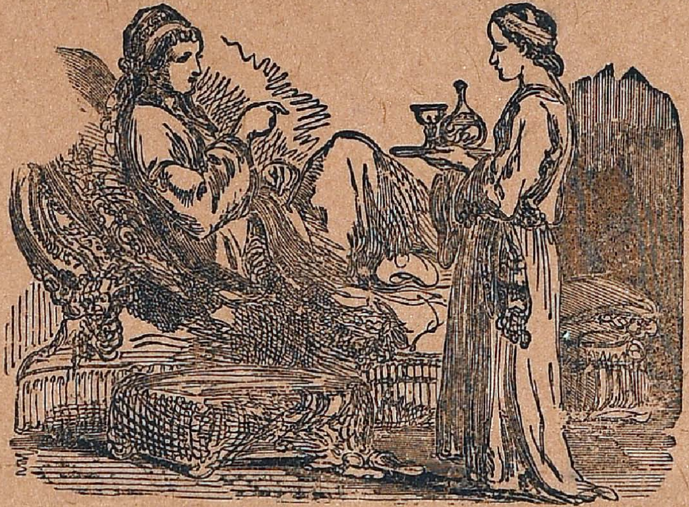
Perhaps you may say, I am glad I am not a leper. Well, you may be thankful for this. You have no leprosy in your body; but have you none in your soul? What is the leprosy of the soul? It is sin.

We are all spiritual lepers; not one is clean in God's sight. The leprosy of the soul is far more dreadful than the leprosy of the body. Unless it is cured, it will end in everlasting punishment in hell.

We cannot cleanse ourselves from sin. Washing in the Ganges cannot remove sin; it may cleanse the body, but it cannot cleanse the soul. God has graciously provided a cure. He gave his own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for us sinners. God can now pardon all who accept Jesus as their Saviour.

Naaman at first did not wish to obey the simple command of the prophet: he wished rather to do "some great thing." Men, through pride, are unwilling to be saved by another; they wish rather to go to heaven on account of their own supposed good deeds. But this is a vain hope; unless they trust in Jesus they must perish.

When Jesus Christ was on earth a leper come to him saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus said, "I will; be thou clean;" and at once

the leper was made whole. Go to Jesus in prayer, and he will cleanse your soul from the leprosy of sin, and at last take you to heaven.

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